

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended): An image data background determining apparatus, comprising:
~~characterized in that it is provided with:~~

an image data acquisition unit for acquiring image data expressing in multiple tones an image in picture elements in a dot matrix arrangement;

a frequency distribution charting unit for charting frequency distributions by totaling the picture elements of the image data acquired by the image data acquisition unit as classified by tone level; and

a background determination unit for computing a statistical quantity representing the characteristic of a reference area demarcated by dividing the frequency distributions ~~according to~~ based on a predescribed tone level and, if that statistical quantity is a sufficient value to indicate the presence of a background, determining that the image has an area constituting a background;

an image data designating unit for designating the image data acquired by said image data acquisition unit to be either color image data or monochrome image data; and

a tone setting unit for setting a tone to demarcate said reference area in response to the designation by said image data designating unit.

2. (currently amended): The image data background determining apparatus, as set forth in ~~C~~claim 1, ~~characterized in that:~~ wherein said background determination unit computes the

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relative frequencies of said reference area and, if either each or the total of the computed relative frequencies is at or above a prescribed threshold, determines that there is an area constituting a background in the image.

3. (currently amended): The image data background determining apparatus, as set forth in either ~~Claim~~ claim 1 or 2, ~~characterized in that:~~ wherein said background determination unit computes the relative frequency of each tone in said reference area and, ~~if~~ when the total of the occurrences of tones having the prescribed or higher relative frequency is not less than a prescribed threshold, determines that there is a background area in the image.

4. (currently amended): The image data background determining apparatus, as set forth in ~~Claim~~ claim 1, ~~characterized in that:~~ wherein said background determination unit computes the standard deviation of the reference area, and determines the presence of an area constituting a background in the image ~~if~~ when the standard deviation is not above a prescribed threshold.

5. (currently amended): The image data background determining apparatus, as set forth in ~~any of Claims~~ claim 2, ~~through 4,~~ ~~characterized in that:~~ wherein said background determination unit computes representative values of said reference area, and determines whether ~~or not~~ there is an area constituting a background in the image by combining the representative values.

6. (currently amended): The image data background determining apparatus, as set forth in ~~any of Claims~~ claim 1, ~~through 5,~~ ~~characterized in that:~~ wherein said background

determination unit applies, in computing statistical values in said reference area, and in smoothing to the frequency distributions.

7. (currently amended): The image data background determining apparatus, as set forth in ~~any of Claims claim 1, through 6, characterized in that:~~ wherein said background determination unit is provided with an image data retouching unit for so retouching the image data of picture elements, if the image has an area constituting a background, as to remove the background ~~according to~~ based on the area constituting the background.

8. (currently amended): The image data background determining apparatus, as set forth in ~~Claim 7, characterized in that:~~ wherein said image data retouching unit, if the area constituting the background of the image is near a highlight, generates a correction curve having a parameter to maximize the tone of picture elements near the highlight, and corrects the tones of picture elements in the image data according to the correction curve.

9. (currently amended): The image data background determining apparatus, as set forth in ~~Claim 8, characterized in that:~~ wherein said background determination unit determines the presence or absence of an object in the image in accordance with prescribed technique and, if there is found an object, said image data retouching unit alters the parameter of said correction curve.

10. (canceled).

11. (currently amended): The image data background determining apparatus, as set forth in ~~Claim 10, characterized in that:~~ claim 1, wherein said image data designating unit designates the image data to be monochrome image data or color image data by the user's choice.

12. (currently amended): The image data background determining apparatus, as set forth in ~~either Claim 10 or 11, characterized in that:~~ claim 1, wherein said tone setting unit sets the tone to demarcate the reference area variably ~~according to~~ based on the state of the frequency distributions.

13. (currently amended): The image data background determining apparatus, as set forth in ~~Claim 12, characterized in that:~~ claim 12, wherein said tone setting unit sets, where the designation by the image data designating unit is for color image data, said reference area narrower toward the high tone or, where it is for monochrome image data, sets said reference area wider than for color image data from the high tone to the low tone.

14. (currently amended): The image data background determining apparatus, as set forth in ~~Claim 13, characterized in that:~~ claim 13, wherein said background area determination unit generates a retouching curve having as its parameter the tone designated by said tone designating unit, and retouches the picture elements of the image data acquired by said image data acquisition unit ~~according to~~ based on the retouching curve.

15. (currently amended): An image data background determining method for determining an area constituting a background in an image ~~according to~~ based on frequency distributions of image data, ~~characterized in that it provided with~~ comprising:

~~an image data acquisition step to acquire~~ acquiring image data expressing in multiple tones an image in picture elements in a dot matrix arrangement;

~~a frequency distribution charting step to charting~~ frequency distributions by totaling the picture elements of the image data acquired at said image data acquisition unit as classified by tone level; ~~and~~

~~a background determination step to compute~~ computing a statistical quantity representing the characteristic of a reference area demarcated by dividing said frequency distributions ~~according to~~ based on a prescribed tone level and, if that statistical quantity is a sufficient value to indicate the presence of a background, determine that said image has an area constituting a background;

designating the image data acquired by said image data acquisition unit to be either color image data or monochrome image data; and

setting a tone to demarcate said reference area in response to the designation by said image data designating unit.

16. (currently amended): A computer readable medium with a recording thereon of an image data background determination control program for determining an area constituting a

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background in an image ~~according to~~ based on frequency distributions of the image data,
~~characterized in that it causes~~ which enables a computer to carry out a method, comprising:

~~an image data acquisition step to acquire~~ acquiring image data expressing in multiple
tones an image in picture elements in a dot matrix arrangement;

~~a frequency distribution charting step to charting~~ frequency distributions by totaling the
picture elements of the image data acquired at said image data acquisition unit as classified by
tone level; ~~and~~

~~a background determination step to compute~~ing a statistical quantity representing the
characteristic of a reference area demarcated by dividing said frequency distributions according
to a prescribed tone level and, if that statistical quantity is a sufficient value to indicate the
presence of a background, determine that said image has an area constituting a background;

designating the image data acquired by said image data acquisition unit to be either color
image data or monochrome image data; and

setting a tone to demarcate said reference area in response to the designation by said
image data designating unit.